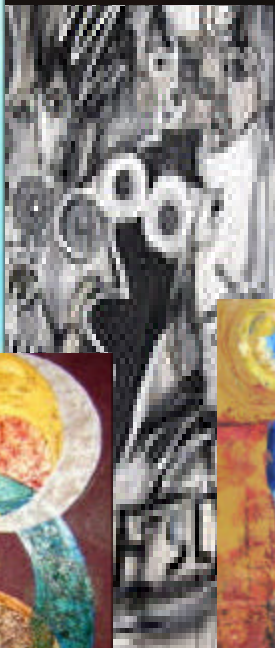
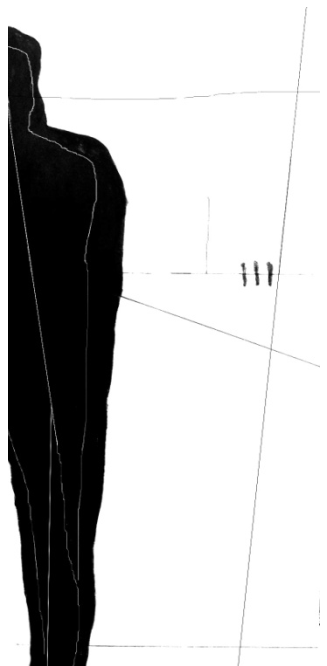




# Caribbean Canvas: Identity in an era of Globalization

December 1, 2009- January 2010  
Opening Night December 5, 6 pm

*Multitudes*  
Contemporary Art Center @TeleAmerica  
Miami Florida





## ***Transnational Identity in an Era of Globalization***

The Fourth *Caribbean Canvass*--the international Caribbean art exhibition of South Florida will open on December 5, 2009 at the newly built *Multitudes* gallery of the contemporary art center at TeleAmerica in Miami, Florida. The 2009 curatorial theme is *Transnational Identity in an Era of Globalization*.

It aims at accounting the emergence of new levels of caribbeaness, the globalization of Caribbean ethnicity, and new meanings for the Caribbean Diaspora. It highlights the international tendency of transnational Caribbeans of the world to establish linkages, symbolic and real, across the boundaries of societies' vast distances apart with significant differences in culture and scale of organization. It also encourages such linkages by developing an environment for sharing of identities and ideologies, mutual definition of problems and cultures, aesthetics and so on.

Up to now, twelve artists from various Caribbean islands have confirmed their participation. These include: Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Cuba, Martinique, Barbados, Bahamas, St Kitts & Nevis and Venezuela. Similarly, prestigious scholars, critics, collectors, diplomats and gallery owners have expressed their interest in attending the exhibition and surrounding events making this year's edition a favorable place for reflection on essential transnational issues in the "global" era.

The 2009 edition takes place in December coinciding with the *Miami Art Basel*. This is an opportune moment to stimulate dialogue in the global contemporary art scene among Caribbean and of respect to the rest of the international art community.

Since 1999, we have focused our attention on Caribbean artists whose works attempt to come to term with issues of self, identity and community, migration, national politics, hope and disillusionment about older models of organization of art and society, memory: art and the making of history, urban culture, transnationalism and globalization.

However, *Caribbean Canvas* cannot ignore that modernity in art has always appeared unconceivable without the claim of new forms and contents that would pretend to chase away existing forms by disqualifying their academic caducity. More than once, the history of art and criticism reveal that styles first declared decadent or obsolete have benefited of a "return in grace". The post-modern break has accelerated indeed multiplied the opportunities for taking history counter-current. Isn't the necessity felt by the west for redistributing the centers of artistic and cultural productions more than the center of decision-making and legitimization at a planetary level one of those occurrences?

### **Organizing Committee**



What sort of moment is this in which the 2009 *Caribbean Canvas* poses the question of Caribbean art at the transnational level? It is a moment of conjuncture with its historical specificity which although exhibiting similarities and continuities with other moments in which we asked similar questions still is not the same moment. The combination of what is different and what is similar defines not only the specificity of the moment but the specificity of the question thus, the strategies of cultural politics with which we attempt to intervene in the global art scene which becomes local (*Art Basel Miami*) for this occasion, and the form and style of cultural theory and criticism that have to associate to this combination.

A civilization that embraces all continents, all races, and all peoples of the Earth is unfolding before our very eyes. The progress of science, the development of methods of transportation and information, the exchanges of peoples, goods and ensuing ideas are resulting in the fact that we are no longer strangers. We are thrown together! Hence, we must enter into talks, dialogue, negotiate and organize together, among people, our region, our continent and our planet Earth. In this new process, each race, each people, each region makes a positive contribution.

Yet, we do not read globalization “as a simple process of cultural homogenization; but always in articulation of the local, the specific of voices, of positioning, of identity, cultural traditions and histories.” (Stuart Hall) Thus, whether understood through the calypso or in the art of carnival, whether in the Caribbean aesthetic heritage of traditional African art which became a powerful influence among European artists who formed an avant-garde in the development of modern art or through the Taino’s that undergirded the fourteenth “beautifully highly polished-black wood duho seats” Anacaona presented as gifts to Bartolommeo de las Casas...; Whether through a diasporic connection with the African-American quilt aesthetics with its displays of specifically chosen patterns in sequence, as a signal to ...! We are dealing here with a production of a region of the Americas that is in ways, unique in the history of contributions to the arts of the continent.

This 2009 edition continues the process of identification of Caribbean visual art as a dynamic contributor to world aesthetics. Some of these dynamics have already been noticed: courage and full powers of self-transformation, courage to never give up, to always try, to transform the odds of migration and frozen paradigms of culture into a dynamic re-commencement in which cultures take on the challenges of transformation of self and heritage in a permanent movement of grinding, always reproducing anew the legacy of vibrancy.

“Invisible things are not necessarily not here” Toni Morrison tells us; the influence of Caribbean aesthetics and processes is so profoundly embedded in Florida artistic practice yet so “*invisiblized*” that it is rarely evoked as such. The contemporary Caribbean artists assembled in this show render moot any attempt to relegate Caribbean art in the peripheries of ‘non-western’ art.

The Primitivist/Naïve worldview has been discredited. Now is the time for efforts to understand the full spectrum of the aesthetic foundations of a truly global twenty first century art and in this, an investigation of Caribbean visual expressions remains fundamental today.

Babacar MBow



The work of **Edouard Duval Carrié**; Haitian in the very sense of the word, continues that old function of giving birth to new aesthetics. We remember the encounter of Picasso, Matisse, Klee, Modigliani, Monet etc. with the arts of Africa —which resulted in the birth of Cubism. We also remember the bursting on the international stage of Duval’s predecessors called the *indigenists* who gave Haitian art its marks of nobility.

Duval Carrié is beyond the stage of heritage re-evaluation and re-appropriation of a civilization and a culture whose manifestations have been interrogated, analyzed and incorporated in dynamic manners to the process of creation. He has risen to a level far from outdated narrow identity-reflexes to produce works that express an existential aesthetic.



**Franklin Sinanan’s** work cannot be imprisoned in a reductive problematic. It unveils the diversity of Caribbean visual productions by throwing light on a field not well known until recently. Sinanan’s dense aesthetic is in the ways in which he weaves a network of relationships with other artistic traditions unveiling an intimate identity--personal and Caribbean.

The echoes of Basquiat’s style equally allow thinking of the richness of the intertextual relationships. Sinanan is a contemporary creator of a mythology both individual and collective marked by cadences and rhythms through the use of anaphors, searching for an aesthetic language capable of expressing the specificity of a transnational identity, a thematic such as that of contradiction or through images such as the Caribbean Diaspora social reality simultaneously heaven and hell.



**Genevieve Lahens** approaches art in an association of memories and spaces of intimacy to get to what Gaston Bachelard called “*topoanalysis*.” The incarnation of place and memory in her thinking rejects the emphasis on memory as a process contained within the mind to point towards an articulation in which memory is always laid on the border between self and the other. In Lahens’ work, the canvas constitutes the border of difference and similarity and is a strainer through which historical facts are negotiated in remembrance, obsolescence, and dynamics of signification of re-presentations.



**Guy Syllien's** work is 'positive' because optimistic. It expresses the aspirations and hopes of the human. Although the work produces images of the human victim, it also mimics what is necessary for the mind's resistance and survival. The multi-layered complexity of his approach becomes clear when we recognize that the mind is in fact constantly rejuvenating and reassuring itself by acts of crying, disguising, covering, camouflaging etc... There is no doubt that the mind itself also undergoes catharsis for Guy's creative process is long and enduring both physically and mentally; but it also acts as a powerful metaphor. Guy Syllien is a humanist *par excellence*. His concern is with the plight of humanity and he sees his own 'predicament' as part of it.



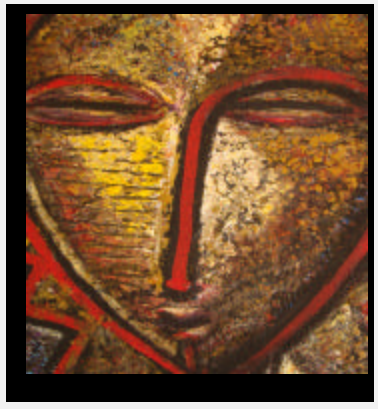
"How did they know what we must know without knowing a page it themselves?" The work above, titled "*Josephine Baker*" is an excellent example. **Marie Therese Dupoux** boldly re-claims the African aesthetic features of Ms. Baker's famous self-presentation in Paris, France, rescuing it from an assumed primitivism. The banana, a historical racist trope when aligned with black representation is deconstructed and replaced with the raffia of African masquerade. For us then, the works of Maritou are important memory devices.

Their colors and configurations indicate the codes of kinship through a fan of connotations triggering remembrance of deeds and exploits, qualities and physical appearance.



If only to serve for global descriptions and predictive adequacy, the work of **Peter Wayne Lewis** would have been enough for understanding the last decades of the twentieth century. But Peter Wayne Lewis was already exploring other goals--an order of understanding different from intuitive common sense, or appropriation.. His quest begins when such modes of thought end, or at least where they fail to address questions that requires for their answer, more than enumeration, cataloguing, impressionistic summaries, selected lists, or non critical formulations.

Peter Wayne Lewis articulates the quest through sequencing; "I sequence the canvases together to make a singular painting for investigating the properties of vision..."



**Philippe Dodard** is engaged in another quest for a deeper spiritual knowledge, which he sought in the iconographies of the Taïno, the Arawak and the African masks. The challenge he knows is to create an art that awakens—an art which embodies different answers to our seemingly irresolvable human problems that need particular attention at this different moment in our history.

Dodard provides the possibility to go beyond the history of types and the consciously articulated meaning of a work of art to its deeper significance and interpretation. Linking thought to visualization, his work emerges as a rejection of suggestions that artistic forms of vision change independently from feelings and state of mind.



**Thomas Esson** came to attention from the ground-breaking New Cuban art exhibition (closed within hours) that caused Esson to seek asylum in the U.S. Provocative political figure paintings often employing scatological forms alongside images of the heroes of the Cuban revolution or self-portraits, the art of Thomas Esson speaks truth to power by articulating an aesthetic of disillusionment about older models of organization of art and society. What come of is a “nuff in yo face...” work that lives no one indifferent.

What Esson offers for our gaze to linger upon is remedies to our frustrations and psychoses that impose a fuzzy rationality; a challenge to the spirit that manipulates things. Thomas Esson has escaped our cannons and norms, our rules and precepts to point toward the path of art thus rescuing us from a world that seems not to contain anything, anymore.



**Turgo Bastien Bastien** highlights an essential component of Caribbean Culture—the African he calls not directly from African but through a diasporic fusion of memories. My call from Africa is a reverberation of Haiti, Trinidad, Brazil, New Orleans...what I want to highlight is the lines of continuities that still inform a memory in motion even as we sought new solutions to historical problems...”.

Bastien belongs to no school but is yet immediately registered because of the complexities, the elegance and spirituality he proposes.

Slices of memories and particular memories extracted from the masses are proposed as intimate monographs; this is the manner in which Turgo recounts the histories

of the origins. However one wants to interpret them, the works of Turgo Bastien imprison our gaze by the depth and harmony emanating from them.

## **Invited Artists**

**Edouard Duval Carrie, Haiti/Miami**

**Peter Wayne Lewis, Jamaica/ Boston**

**Alejandro Mendoza, Cuba, Miami**

**Thomas Esson, Cuba, Miami**

**Franklin Sinanan, Trinidad and Tobago**

**Béatrice Mellinger, Martinique**

**Genevieve Lahens, Montreal Canada**

**Louise Porter, Barbados**

**Francesca Lalanne, Haiti/Miami**

## **Project Partners**

**Florida Africana Studies Consortium**

**The Institute of Caribbean Studies**

**The Caribbean American Foundation**

**The Caribbean Consular Corps of Miami**

**The Haitian Cultural Alliance**

**The Caribbean Chamber of Commerce, Fort Lauderdale**

**John West Architecture Studio**

**The Museum of the National Pantheon, Haiti**

**The Association of Caribbean Women Scholar**

**Cornell University Africana Studies Department**

**New York University, Binghamton, Department of Africana Studies**

**Caribbean Today, Weekly**

**Caribbean Commentary, Weekly**

**WAS 1170**

**WSRF 1580**

**Miami Herald**

**Sun-Sentinel**

**WHQT, Hot 105 FM**

**TeleAmerica, Miami**

Multitudes Gallery @ TeleAmerica – Design District  
5570 NE 4TH Avenue, Miami Florida.